

WEARDALE

Rural District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT

..... OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR 1937.

CROOK :

T. LINTON (WM. WALTON), PRINTER, CHURCH STREET.

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WEARDALE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of Medical Officer of Health for 1937.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE WEARDALE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Mr. CHAIRMAN and GENTLEMEN,

I herewith submit to you my Report for the year 1937.

SECTION A.

Natural and Social Conditions of the Area.

The District has now got an area of 99,562 acres.

During the year, from 1st April, the area was increased in consequence of the re-arrangement of the sanitary areas of the County. Two portions were added to the pre-existing area :—

(1) The former Stanhope Urban District, with an area of 216 acres and an approximate population of 1,573. This area comprises the village of Stanhope, Stanhope Castle with park and gardens, a portion of Ashes Quarry, and some meadow land.

(2) An area of 1,593 acres of woodland and agricultural land at the eastern end of the District, containing Harperley Hall with its policies, Low Harperley Farm, Black Hall, McNeil Farm and a portion of the Wear Valley Branch of the L.N.E.R. This was formerly part of the Auckland Rural District, and contains only a very small population. The eastern boundary of our area is now a line parallel to and 200 feet west of the road leading from Tow Law to Witton-le-Wear, and extending from Harperley Colliery southward to the road leading to McNeil Farm.

The population of the District as estimated by the Registrar-General is 9,207, and on this figure our statistics are based. The population at the 1931 census was 10,714, and although there has undoubtedly been some shrinkage of population, owing mainly to depressed industrial conditions in Upper Weardale, I think the figure of 9,207 is rather too low.

The inhabited houses at the end of the year numbered 3,458 according to the Rate Books.

The rateable value of the District, and the sum represented by a penny rate, were £40,296 and £160 respectively.

The District is pre-eminently a mountainous and sparsely populated area, a large proportion of it being barren moorland, only of use for sheep and grouse. There is comparatively little arable farming, and what there is, is confined to the eastern end of the District where the altitude is lower. Pastoral farming is the principal industry and, after that, limestone quarrying in the Stanhope and Frosterley neighbourhood and steelworks at Wolsingham. Lead and spar mining at Rookhope and Upper Weardale, with whinstone and gannister quarrying, also provide employment. Increased mechanization in the limestone quarries, in the way of compressed air drilling for shot-holes, and steam excavators, has resulted in a considerable reduction in the number of men required to produce a given output of stone. The Weardale Lead Co., Ltd., are sinking capital in the electrification of their mine at Rookhope, and it is hoped that this will give our lead-mining industry the fillip it so badly needs. In the upper part of Weardale employment has been at a very low ebb throughout the year owing to the completion of the Burnhope Reservoir works, and the decrease in the number of men employed in the mines and quarries; this has been responsible for a number of people leaving the District and migrating to other parts of the country where work is more plentiful.

Vital Statistics.

BIRTHS.—LIVE BIRTHS.

The total number of live births registered during the year was 134.

			Male.	Female.
Legitimate	...	...	77	54
Illegitimate	...	...	1	2
			—	—
		Total	78	56

STILL BIRTHS.—These numbered 2.

			Male.	Female.
Legitimate	...	...	2	0
Illegitimate	...	...	0	0
			—	—
		Total	2	0

On the basis of an estimated population of 9,207, these figures give a live birth-rate of 14·5 per 1,000 population. This is very little lower than the rate for the whole of England and Wales for the same period, which was 14·9.

The still births were equivalent to 15·4 per 1,000 births, and the still birth-rate was 0·2 per 1,000 population, which is lower than the corresponding rate for the whole of England and Wales.

DEATHS.—These numbered 130.

Males	...	...	62
Females	...	...	68
Total			<hr/> 130

This gives a death-rate of 14·1 per 1,000 population, which compares unfavourably with the death-rate of 12·4 for the whole of England and Wales.

MATERNAL MORTALITY.

Two deaths occurred from causes other than puerperal sepsis, giving a maternal mortality rate of 14·7 per 1,000 births, which is too high.

INFANTILE DEATHS.

There were 3 deaths of infants under one year of age.

	Male.	Female.
Legitimate	1	1
Illegitimate	0	1
Total	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 2

This is equivalent to an infantile death-rate of 22 per 1,000 births, which is low and compares favourably with a rate of 58 for the whole of England and Wales.

The legitimate infantile death-rate was 15·0 per 1,000 legitimate live births. The illegitimate infantile death-rate was 333 per 1,000 illegitimate live births.

Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	..	...	12
Cancer death-rate 1·3 per 1,000 population.			
Deaths from Measles (all ages)	...	...	0
Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages),...			0
Death from Diarrhœa (under 2 years)	...		0

I see nothing worthy of special comment in regard to sickness or invalidity or environmental conditions during the year, and I do not think that the health or physique of either children or adults have been materially affected by unemployment.

CAUSES OF DEATH.				Males.	Females.
All Causes				62	68
1	Typhoid and Paratyphoid fever			0	0
2	Measles			0	0
3	Scarlet Fever			0	0
4	Whooping Cough			0	0
5	Diphtheria			0	2
6	Influenza			1	1
7	Encephalitis lethargica			0	0
8	Cerebro-spinal fever			0	0
9	Tuberculosis of respiratory system			3	1
10	Other tuberculosis			3	1
11	Syphilis			0	0
12	General paralysis of insane, tabes, etc.			0	0
13	Cancer			5	7
14	Diabetes			0	1
15	Cerebral hæmorrhage, etc.			7	6
16	Heart disease			16	20
17	Aneurysm			0	0
18	Other circulatory diseases			7	8
19	Bronchitis			0	3
20	Pneumonia (all forms)			2	3
21	Other respiratory diseases			0	0
22	Peptic ulcer			0	0
23	Diarrhœa, &c. (under 2 years)			0	0
24	Appendicitis			0	1
25	Cirrhosis of liver			0	1
26	Other diseases of liver			0	0
27	Other digestive diseases			0	1
28	Acute and chronic nephritis			0	0
29	Puerperal sepsis			0	0
30	Other puerperal diseases			0	2
31	Congenital debility, premature birth, etc.			1	2
32	Senility			0	4
33	Suicide			0	0
34	Other violence			4	1
35	Other defined diseases			9	3
36	Ill-defined diseases... ..			4	0
37	Diarrhœa (over two years)			0	0
38	Small-pox			0	0
39	Poliomyelitis			0	0
40	Polio-encephalitis			0	(1)
Total				62	68

Appended are the birth-rates and death-rates for the preceding seven years:—

	Birth-rate per 1,000 population.	Death-rate. per 1,000 population.
1930	13·4	13·2
1931	13·8	14·6
1932	15·5	14·4
1933	17·1	12·8
1934	14·4	12·9
1935	15·4	13·1
1936	13·6	15·0
1937	14·5	14·1

SECTION B.

General Provision of Health Services.

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF.

(a) MEDICAL.

Medical Officer of Health (part time) JAS. BANNERMAN, M.B.
(EDIN).

Tuberculosis Medical Officer	} Under Durham County Council.
Venereal Diseases Medical Officer	
School Medical Officer	
Maternity and Child Welfare Medical Officer	
Obstetric Consultants	

(b) OTHERS.

Sanitary Inspector : JAS. R. RIDLEY Cert. R.S.I., Lond.

Veterinary Surgeon	} Under Durham County Council.
Public Analyst	
Health Visitor	

LABORATORY FACILITIES

Examinations of sputum, throat swabs and blood for the diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis, diphtheria and typhoid fever, as well as other investigations when considered necessary, are carried out at the College of Medicine, Newcastle-on-Tyne, for all practitioners in the area, at the expense of the County Council. During the year 51 such examinations were carried out and the results transmitted to me.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES.

A new and up-to-date Motor Ambulance has been put on the road by the Weardale Ambulance Association. This is a voluntary organization carried on by annual subscription of 4/- per household,

entitling each subscriber to have the use of the ambulance four times in the year, provided that the doctor in attendance deems it necessary. Most of the transporting of the sick and injured in the District is carried out by this ambulance.

Workers in the quarries have, through their trade union, the services of a Motor Ambulance for transport to Hospital when necessary, and in less serious cases the provision of a Motor Car, or the grant of a bus fare.

The District can be said to be reasonably well supplied with Ambulance facilities now.

NURSING IN THE HOME.

The whole of the District is served by District Nurses, with the exception of the sparsely populated northern fringe of Hunstanworth. These nurses are all under the auspices of the Durham County Nursing Association, are subsidized by this body and are all certified midwives, except in the case of the Stanhope Nursing Association, whose nurse is not maternity trained. This has caused some difficulty in regard to the provision of midwifery and maternity service for the Stanhope neighbourhood in connection with the Midwives' Act, 1936. The Stanhope Nursing Association has a long and creditable history as an entirely voluntary organization and does not receive any financial assistance from the County as do the other Nursing Associations in the area. The difficulty has to a certain extent been overcome by an arrangement whereby the Frosterley District Nurse, who is maternity trained, is available for maternity cases in the area served by the Stanhope Nursing Association.

TREATMENT CENTRES AND CLINICS.

Maternity and Child Welfare Centres are in operation at Wolsingham, Stanhope and St. John's Chapel. There is a Tuberculosis Clinic at Bishop Auckland and a V.D. Clinic at Durham. These are under County Council control.

HOSPITALS.

This wide area is devoid of any general hospital accommodation. Cases for treatment or investigation in hospital are practically all conveyed to Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary, a distance of thirty miles or more.

SECTION C.

Sanitary Circumstances of Area.

WATER.

Wolsingham and Elm Park Terrace are supplied by the Durham County Water Board. All the other villages in the area are provided for by local supplies (some 15 in number) under the control of this Council. These supplies are all of good quality for drinking purposes and are mainly soft in character.

During the year the following extensions and improvements were carried out :—

Thornley.—A new storage chamber has been provided and a thorough overhaul of the source of supply carried out.

West Black Dene.—The 2-inch water main has been extended.

St. John's Chapel.—The 2-inch main has been extended to the Durham County Council Elementary School.

Edmundbyers.—Supervision of a new service supply to the Vicarage.

Frosterley.— do. do. do.

Windyside, Westgate.—A 2-inch branch has been carried from the main to this hamlet.

Rookhope.—A sample of water was taken from a spring on Rhymey Law and sent to the County Analyst for examination ; it was found to be suitable for human consumption.

DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.

We have 17 village sewerage schemes in the District, the sewage being treated by land filtration. There has not been any trouble with these schemes, with the exception of Stanhope. This latter scheme has for a long time been far from satisfactory, the area of land in use being insufficient, and there not being enough fall for the effluent. Further land is being purchased to enable the necessary improvements to be carried out.

RIVERS AND STREAMS.

The pollution of streams by the throwing in of household refuse, and worse, still goes on in spite of warning notices. It is sad to think that so many persons residing near to these pleasant tributary streams should use the bed of the stream as an ashpit.

CLOSET ACCOMMODATION.

During the year 10 ash-closets and 96 ashpit-privies were converted into water closets. The total number of water closets is now 989, ash-closets 241, and ashpit-privies 391.

PUBLIC CLEANSING.

Up till now, Wolsingham and Stanhope have been the only places in the District with any system of public scavenging. The Council has wisely decided to extend public scavenging to the other villages. Frosterley is to have a complete system (both wet and dry); Railway Terrace (Stanhope) and Crawleyside are to be merged with Stanhope for scavenging purposes, and the other up-dale villages are to have a scheme of dry scavenging. Arrangements are being made to secure suitable land for this.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF AREA.

The work done by the Sanitary Inspectors department is tabulated herewith :—

	Informal Written Notices by Inspector	Formal Notice by Authority	Nuisances Abated after Notice
Dwelling Houses —Foul Conditions and Structural Defects	57		57
Dairies and Milk Shops	16		16
Cowsheds... ..	87		87
Bakehouses	1		1
Slaughter-houses	2		2
Ashpits and Privies	59		59
Refuse and Manure Deposits	4		4
Water-closets	19		19
Defective Yard Paving	1		1
Drainage — Defective Traps	2		2
„ Other Faults	37		37
Water Supplies	58		58
Pigsties	0		0
Totals	343		343

SHOPS.

No action was necessary under the Shops Act, 1934.

SMOKE ABATEMENT.

No action was necessary.

SWIMMING BATHS AND POOLS.

There is one in the District, at Newtown Hotel, Stanhope, and it is perfectly clean and hygienic in every respect.

ERADICATION OF BED BUGS.

No action was necessary.

HOUSE DISINFECTION.

During the year 53 houses were disinfected after infectious disease, and disinfectants supplied where necessary.

FACTORIES.

There are none in the area.

SECTION D. Housing.

At the beginning of the year, your Inspector and I spent a week over a survey of the dwelling houses in Rookhope, Hunstanworth, Crawleyside and the villages of upper Weardale. Part of this survey is now receiving your consideration.

On November 20th, I was present with your Chairman, Clerk and Sanitary Inspector at an interview with the Ministry of Health in regard to unfit houses in the District. We were given to understand that the Ministry wished the problem to be tackled more expeditiously. In view of the attitude of the Ministry, I would urge the Council to proceed, as soon as possible, to a consideration of the unfit houses in the villages of Upper Weardale.

During the year 17 new houses were erected by private enterprise, and occupied as follows :—

Wolsingham	...	...	6
St. John's Chapel	...	...	3
Frosterley	...	...	2
Edmundbyers	...	...	1
Thornley	...	...	5
			—
			17
			—

HOUSING INSPECTION.

i. Inspection of Dwelling Houses during the year

(1) (a)	Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	...	...	367
(b)	Number of inspections made for the purpose	...	...	441
(2)	Number of dwelling houses (included under sub-head (1) above) which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925	...	...	367
(3)	Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	..	...	0
(4)	Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	...	...	104

2. Remedy of defects during the year without service of formal notices.

Number of defective dwellings rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers	104
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3. Action under statutory powers during the year :—

(a) Proceedings under sections 9, 10 and 16 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	8
(2) Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices :—	
(a) By owners	4
(b) By Local Authority in default of owners	0

(b) Proceedings under Public Health Acts :—

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied	0
(2) Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :—	
(a) By owners	0
(b) By Local Authority in default of owners	0

(c) Proceedings under sections 11 and 13 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	7
(2) Number of dwelling houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders	0

(d) Proceedings under section 12 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—

(1) Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were made	9
(2) Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the tenement or room having been rendered fit	0

4. Housing Act 1936.—Part IV.—Overcrowding.

(a)	(1) Number of dwellings overcrowded at end of year	...	...	124
	(2) Number of families dwelling therein	...	...	124
	(3) Number of persons dwelling therein	...	...	623
(b)	Number of new cases of overcrowding reported during the year	...	...	0

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| (c) | (1) Number of cases of overcrowding relieved during the year | 0 |
| | (2) Number of persons concerned in such cases | 0 |
| (d) | Cases in which dwelling houses have again become overcrowded after the Local Authority have taken steps for the abatement of overcrowding | 0 |
| (e) | The somewhat high standard set by the Housing Act 1936, as to what constitutes overcrowding, operates rather severely on a great many of the 2-roomed cottages in the dale, often isolated and situated on a breezy hillside, and where there is no aggregation of houses. In such cottages where there is a young family the dwelling now soon becomes technically overcrowded, although the occupants are quite healthy and contented. | |

SECTION E.

Inspection and Supervision of Food.

(a) MILK SUPPLY.

The great increase in the sale of new milk in bulk to which I have referred in my last few Reports, continues. Very little milk is now being made into butter and cheese at our Weardale farms. The development of motor transport, the fixed price which the farmer gets through the Milk Marketing Board, and the saving of labour involved in buttermaking, have been the main contributory factors in bringing about this great alteration in the agricultural life of the dale.

During the year I only received one complaint of dirty milk from the District having been detected at its destination, which was Newcastle. On investigating the matter, I was met with the usual complaint from the farmer of dirty churns being left by the motor-lorry driver. The Dairy Companies aver that they always send out the churns in a clean condition. The lorryman is only human, and, I fear, is tempted to fill up churns which are only partially full with milk from other half full churns. The result of course, is that when unclean milk is detected there is an element of doubt as to who is the guilty party. The lack of adequate sterilizing plant on the small farms is also a source of difficulty.

In the last annual report of the County Veterinary Medical Officer, I find that he visited 665 farms in the area and examined 4,012 milking cows. He says that in some cases "owing to badly constructed byres it is impossible to keep the cows clean throughout the winter, and that except at a few premises which have been brought up to "Accredited" standard, the general hygienic conditions of the byres is poor."

I visited, myself, a considerable number of byers during the year, and 247 inspections of dairies and byres were made by your Sanitary Inspector. Some 87 byres were improved by the provision of additional lighting, ventilation, concrete floors and roof repairs.

A really excellent modern byre has been erected at Ruffside by the proprietor, Col. Clifton Brown, M.P., and also a new byre at Wolsingham.

(b) MEAT.

The few private slaughter-houses in the area have been visited on several occasions and found fairly satisfactory.

(c) BAKEHOUSE.

The only one is that of the local Co-operative Society at Frosterley. This was visited once during the year and I was quite pleased with the general standard of cleanliness.

SECTION F.

Prevalance of, and control over, Infectious Disease.

GENERAL (OTHER THAN TUBERCULOSIS).

I received 78 notifications as follows :—

Disease.	Total cases notified.	Cases admitted to Hospital	Deaths.
Smallpox	0	0	0
Scarlet fever	39	38	0
Diphtheria	17	16	2
Typhoid and Paratyphoid fever ...	0	0	0
Pneumonia	7	0	5
Puerperal pyrexia	3	0	0
Erysipelas	8	0	0
Polio-encephalitis	1	0	1
Ophthalmia neonatorum	2	0	0
Dysentery	1	1	0
Total	78	55	8

There was no particular epidemic in any one area; the cases were fairly uniformly spread over the district.

DIPHTHERIA IMMUNIZATION.

Handbills on this subject, offering free immunization to children between the ages of 1 and 14, were distributed through the schools at the end of the summer term, and the work of immunization was carried out in the months of September and October. Arrangements were made for the collaboration of private practitioners in the scheme, they receiving, through me, the necessary material for those children whose parents wished them to be done privately. The total number of children immunized was 611, and of these 430 were done by me at the various schools, with the consent of the County Education Authority, and 181 by the other doctors practising in the area. The number of children immunized was probably about 40% of all the children in the area between the ages of 1 and 14. The method employed was that known as the A.P.F. single shot method. This is, admittedly, not the most perfect method of securing complete immunity to the disease, and would not have been adopted had we been dealing with children in an institution or boarding school; but in a voluntary scheme, such as ours, it would have been practically impossible to get the children to submit to any other method which involved more than a single injection. A register has been kept of all the children immunized.

HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.

This may, I think, be considered adequate for such an area. About 18—20 patients is the maximum number that can be safely dealt with in our hospital at one time. The hospital was originally intended for the reception of scarlet fever and diphtheria cases only, but latterly a certain amount of discretionary latitude has been given me as Medical Officer, in regard to the admission of typhoid and other diseases, should circumstances permit.

I have always on hand a supply of diphtheria antitoxin which is available to any doctor practising in the area.

Nothing has been done locally in regard to the employment of measles serum for prophylaxis or attenuation.

PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS.

No action under the Public Health Acts for prevention or treatment has been necessary.

TUBERCULOSIS.

No action was necessary under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, 1925 or Sect. 62 of the Public Health Act, 1925.

I received 9 notifications of Tuberculosis—4 pulmonary and 5 non-pulmonary. Deaths from tuberculosis numbered 8—4 being pulmonary and 4 non-pulmonary. The tuberculosis death-rate was .87 per 1,000 population. The administration of measures dealing with this disease is under the County Council.

Age Periods.			New Cases.				Deaths.			
			Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0	...	..						
1	...	...			1				1	
5	...	...				1				
15	...	...	2				1		1	1
25	...	...				1		1	1	
35	...	...		1			1			
45	...	...	1		1	1	1			
55	...	...						
65 and upwards										
Totals	...		3	1	2	3	3	1	3	1

At the close of the year the Tuberculosis Register was as follows :—

	Pulmonary	Non-Pulmonary
Male ...	51	48
Female ...	60	37
	<u>111</u>	<u>85</u>

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

JAS. BANNERMAN.

